



CECOM Science & Technology (S&T) Reinvention Lab

Issue 7

July 2000

PERSONNEL DEMO

What have we done so far...

Progress Report:

- On 31 May 00, Dr. Diane Disney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy), formally transmitted the demo project plan to OPM. That means we've "crossed the river from Virginia to D.C. and reached the backstretch."

Recent Changes:

- The portion of the Annual General Pay Increase (a.k.a. COLA) has been removed from the pay pool. All employees rated in the acceptable range are guaranteed the full COLA each year.
- FY 00 Defense Authorization Act removes high grade controls and supervisory ratio controls from organizations covered by a Personnel Demonstration Project. . . in a word, high grade cap disappears!
- Direct hiring of external candidates for critical shortage jobs has been revised. Positions will continue to be filled through OPM certificates or under delegated examining agreements; however, the "Rule of Three" will be eliminated. When there are no more than 15 qualified applicants and none of the applicants are eligible for veteran's preference, all applicants are immediately referred to the selecting official without rating and ranking.

What's Next?

- The project plan is now in the final review stage. It will be processed through a number of program offices within OPM. Once approved, it is published as a *Federal Register Notice of Intent*. The Federal Register provides notification of the proposed project to both Congress and the workforce and will be mailed to each employee of the RDEC, SEC and ISEC. This is the first of two Federal Register publications.
- Within 30 days after the first Federal Register notice is published, OPM will host public hearings. There will probably be public hearings at Fort Monmouth, Fort Belvoir and Fort Huachuca. A public hearing is an opportunity for employees and the public to provide comments on the proposed Personnel Demonstration Project.
- Next come formal negotiations with the Unions representing RDEC, SEC and ISEC employees. Formal negotiations are required on all aspects of the Personnel Demo Project. Unions represent approximately 50% of the employees included in the S&T Personnel Demo Project. Unions represent employees even though they may not have joined the Union and pay union dues. For more information on the negotiation process, see the article on page 3, "The Art of Negotiations."

- Following a review of the comments and any necessary revisions, a second and final *Federal Register Notice of Approval* is published and mailed to every employee. All comments from the public hearings must be summarized and addressed in the second and final notice.
- Implementation follows no sooner than 90 days after the final Federal Register Notice is published.

OPM drafts bill to simplify rules governing Personnel Demonstration Projects

The "Federal Human Resources Management Innovation Act of 2000," aims to simplify rules governing personnel demonstration projects. The bill would raise the cap on the number of employees who can participate in a project, speed up project timelines and give OPM the authority to extend demonstration project innovations to other agencies.

PERSONNEL DEMO

The Personnel Demo Newsletter is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-81. It is published quarterly for employees of the CECOM Research, Development and Engineering Center, Software Engineering Center and the Information Systems Engineering Command, to create a better understanding of the S&T Personnel Demo. The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.
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Recent survey shows increase in support of demo

This past March, the Information Systems Engineering Command (ISEC) employees at Fort Huachuca, AZ voted to see what the level of support was for the proposed Personnel Demonstration Project.

The vote was taken via secret ballots distributed by the Mission Support Directorate through email. Hard copies of these ballots were collected and tallied by Mr. Pete Criscuolo, ISEC S-1. The survey simply asked:

On the subject of the CECOM RDEC Personnel Demonstration Project, it is my opinion that:

_____ ISEC should participate in this demonstration project.

_____ ISEC should not participate in this demonstration project.

_____ I have no opinion on this matter.

When the survey was taken, there were 467 Civilians on board at ISEC with 354 responding, or 76% of the workforce. The results were **169** in favor, **162** against, with **23** having no opinion. A sample of the comments received were:

"Yes, but eliminate the midpoint rule and the 50% rule."

"No, concern that managers will protect "fair haired children" and rate others unfairly."

"Yes, Don't delay!"

"No, not enough information about specifics, like performance metrics, for a well-reasoned decision."

"Yes, seems a quicker means of advancement for step 10 people."

"No, concerned with competition between workers on higher vs. lesser visibility projects and workers in one directorate vs. another directorate."

A complete breakdown of the vote, by directorate, as well as all the comments received is available at the Personnel demo website at:

<http://www.monmouth.army.mil/cecom/rdec/PersDemo/main/html/>. Click on CURRENT STATUS.

(Note: In July 1998, when the Personnel Demonstration plan was still being formulated, a similar survey was taken at ISEC and at that time only 26% voted yes, 52% voted no, and 22% were undecided, or 2 to 1 against the project. As you can see from the most recent survey, support for the personnel demonstration has grown as changes are made and people began to better understand the plan. So it is important to continue to provide feedback to management and your union.)

The Art of Negotiations

It is said negotiations begin in childhood when we agree to take the bitter medicine only in exchange for candy. We master negotiation skills during all our life, negotiating with family, friends, real estate agents, car dealers, co-workers and supervisors. Negotiation can and should be a very helpful way of getting rid of the gap between two parties, and help both sides to come to a mutual agreement.

Under the process called collective bargaining, unions and management negotiate with the union acting as an agent for employees. In the Federal government, management officials and union representatives are required by statute "to meet and negotiate in good faith for the purposes of collective bargaining." The duty to bargain in good faith does not compel either management or the union to agree to a proposal or to make concessions. It only necessitates bargaining on a topic so the parties can attempt to reach an agreeable position.

Prior to implementation of a demonstration project, labor unions, as representatives of employees have to be consulted and the provisions of the personnel demo project are fully negotiable. Labor unions have to agree to the demonstration project in order for bargaining unit employees to be included. Of the current nine active demo projects throughout DOD, seven have successfully negotiated agreements, the Naval Research Labs do not have unions, and the DOD Acquisition Workforce Demo is still negotiating with some units. Historically, when unions have not agreed to participate in the project, organizations have proceeded to implement for non-bargaining unit employees only.

The S&T Personnel Demo project is proposed to affect approximately 2500 employees from the Research, Development and Engineering Center (RDEC), the Software Engineering Center (SEC) and the Information Systems Engineering Command (ISEC). Collectively referred to as the "RDE organizations" employees are geographically dispersed at twenty-nine different locations. Local units of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) at Fort Monmouth and Fort Huachuca along with a local unit of the

National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) at Fort Monmouth represent approximately 50% of all RDE employees. Unions are responsible for representing the interests of all the employees they represent without discrimination and without regard to union membership.

The remaining 50% not represented by a union (known as non-bargaining unit employees) are generally managers, supervisors and those employees primarily at Fort Belvoir, Virginia where there are no unions.

The Unions have been a part of a number of briefings and meetings during the development of the demo plan and there have been informal discussions. However, formal negotiations have not occurred and are not planned until OPM publishes the first *Federal Register* notice, which is tentatively scheduled for this fall. It's important; therefore, to continue to keep union and management representatives informed of your position on the issues.

Hot Topic – Retirement

We're starting a series of articles for publication in the *Monmouth Message* on "hot topics" items you're most concerned about in the Personnel Demo. If there's a topic you'd like addressed, send a message to our anonymous e-mail address at stdemoqa@mail1.monmouth.army.mil and we'll address the most requested topics. We'll also address them in the FAQ section on our website. Our objective is to give you the straight facts so you can make an informed judgement about the Demo.

We've picked retirement for this column since over one-third of CECOM

employees become eligible to retire within the next five years, which is coincidentally the length of the Demo. If you want to read up on retirement plans, try the Office of Personnel Management website at www.opm.gov/retire. The basics of the two plans (CSRS and FERS) are explained there.

The Demo does not change the rules concerning when you can retire or how your pension is calculated. The requirements for length of service and age do not change. The Demo can, however, affect your highest three consecutive years of pay, since the last three years of service are usually the highest. Anyone considering retiring within the next few years should be concerned about the Demo's impact on his or her pension.

Some key points to know about the Demo:

- When you are converted into the Demo, your pay will consist of your current base pay, plus locality, **plus** a prorated portion of your next step increase based on time worked toward your next step. If you're not a step 10, you will get this raise upon implementation of the Demo.
- You're guaranteed the full General Pay Increase (a.k.a. COLA) as long as your appraisal score is within the Acceptable range (10 or higher out of a possible 50).

If you are considering retirement in the next few years you need to look closely at your specific situation and the timing of your retirement. Demo could significantly increase your high three and you could possibly retire earlier or with a higher pension. On the other side, low appraisal scores could require you to work longer for the pension you want. You should assess your own skills and judge how you might be rated under the Demo.

In the "What's in it for me?" section of the Demo website, there is an interactive feature where you can input your actual current salary and calculate pay outs based upon any performance score you choose. This "what if" scenario has been very popular and is a graphic illustration to aid you in understanding how different performance scores would be rewarded. (Visit the website at www.monmouth.army.mil/cecom/rdec/PerDemo/main.htm.)

Other Demo features you need to consider:

- If you are a GS-13 Step 10, you will no longer be subject to high grade cap because the high grade cap does not apply to employees participating in a Demonstration project. Your salary can progress beyond that of a GS-13/10 without a formal promotion; therefore, potential to increase your high three.
- Through performance based annual pay increases, you can earn what would amount to part of, or more than, a step increase every year rather than having the two or three year waiting period under the current system – another possible high three boost.
- The retirement bottom line, for most employees, is that the Demo will provide a real opportunity to increase your pension through hard work -- you cannot coast to retirement and expect your high three to increase.

Who Moved My Cheese?

By
Page Fisher

What a clever title! A book with a title like that promises to be a sharp-witted, fun read! My spirits were slightly dampened upon learning that it is touted as "a guide and training tool for America's top corporations and organizations, a cultural phenomenon that is changing people's

lives". The "fun" factor had definitely slipped a notch or two; however, I bought the book. Under normal circumstances, I would be careful to not give away the story. As you'll see, this is not a normal circumstance:

The story: a parable

The setting: a maze

The characters:

- Two mice named Sniff and Scurry. These characters' needs are simple: cheese, keep it coming, and don't change a thing! They have grown accustomed to their cubicle in the maze, cobwebs and all, and to the cheese that comes with it. They don't adapt well when the winds of change sweep through their little maze and the cheese supply gets moved.
- The "littlepeople" (mouse-sized humans) are Hem and Haw. These are the smart ones, of course. They see the handwriting on the wall, go forth to discover new places and cheese, adapt quickly, and gain a new sense of self-worth in the process. They saw change coming, faced it straight on, and adapted. How could they miss living happily ever after in Cheese Heaven?

Please read on. The characters learned the following:

- Read the handwriting on the wall.
- Change happens – the cheese will get moved.
- Anticipate change – be ready when the cheese does get moved.
- Monitor change – smell the cheese often so you'll know when yours is getting old.

- Adapt quickly – let go of the old cheese and enjoy the new.
- Enjoy change – savor the adventure, and the new cheese.
- It helps to laugh (compliments of yours truly).

This story has charmed millions, and the book seems to have taken up permanent

residence on everybody's best seller list. Though the substance of the story is good enough, even though provoking, I found the parable itself simplistic and silly – one reviewer called it a Golden Book for adults. My \$19.95 is gone, yours isn't. Next month's reading assignment will be "The Little Engine that Could".

"The federal work force is no longer the army of clerks we deployed fifty years ago. Human resources systems that were designed for the stable bureaucracies of the 1950's and 60's simply have to change so that agencies and their employees can cope effectively with the reality that we must all "adapt or be pushed aside." A quote by OPM Director Janice Lachance in recent testimony before a Senate subcommittee on managing human capital in the 21st Century.

SCRAMBLE

Unscramble these five words, one letter to each square, to form six ordinary words.

DRAET

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NOEASR

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TESLET

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GELAHG

		○				○
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ARIGNBA

					○	○	
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What people do to reach an agreement

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above picture.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Answers appear on Page 6.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it" is the slogan of the complacent, the arrogant or the scared." It's an excuse for inaction, a call to non-arms. It's a mind-set that assumes (or hopes) that today's realities will continue tomorrow in a tidy, linear and predictable fashion. Pure fantasy. In this sort of culture, you won't find people who pro-actively take steps to solve problems as they emerge."

General Colin Powell, Chairman (Ret), Joint Chiefs of Staff